

**Biodiversity Conservation & Economic Growth
(BCEG) Project**

QUARTERLY REPORT

November 2001-January 2002

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Bulgaria Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project

is a collaborative initiative between the

**United States Agency for International Development
and the
Government of the Republic of Bulgaria**

implemented by

Associates in Rural Development, Inc.

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Acronyms

ARD	Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
BOC	Bulgarian Orthodox Church
BCEG	Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project
BSBCP	Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Program
BSPB	Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds
CBNP	Central Balkan National Park
CPT	Core Planning Team
CRP	Contract Results Package
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EPA	Environmental Protection Act
FLAG	Firm Level Assistance Group
FY	Financial Year
GEF	Global Environment Facility (note the acronym “GEF” is also generically in Bulgaria for the USAID/GEF Biodiversity project)
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOB	Government of Bulgaria
GPS	Global Positioning System
HEC	Higher Expert Council
HQ	Headquarters
IQC	Indefinite Quantities Contract
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
MOAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
MOE	Ministry of Economy
MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Management Plan
NEPF	National Environmental Protection Fund
NET	National Eco-Trust
NFMTF	National-Level Financial Mechanisms Task Force
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	National Nature Protection Service (of MOEW)

NP	National Park
NPD	National Park Directorate
NTEF	National Trust Eco-Fund
NTNR	Non-Timber Natural Resources
PA	Protected Area(s)
PMU	Project Management Unit
PR	Public Relations
REA	Rapid Ecological Assessment
RMNP	Rila Monastery Nature Park
RNP	Rila National Park
SOW	Statement of Work
TA	Technical Assistance
TBD	To Be Determined
TOR	Terms of Reference
UDF	United Democratic Forces
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Preface

The Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth (BCEG) Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), as part of its strategic support to the Republic of Bulgaria. The Project is sponsored by USAID in conjunction with the Government of Bulgaria – the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW). The Project is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments, and its implementation covers the period: May 2000 – October 2002.

This Project is a logical evolution of earlier USAID assistance to biodiversity conservation in the country. It follows some 10 years of assessment, technical assistance and financing of Bulgaria's biodiversity conservation strategic development, new protected areas legislation, and new national park institutions. The Project is designed to capitalize on the achievements of the Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Biodiversity Project (implemented during the period June 1995-April 2000), and builds on lessons learned.

The BCEG Project addresses six specific contract themes known as “contract result packages”. The BCEG Project includes the finalization and implementation of two national park management plans, the development of a new management plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park. It assists in the development of financial mechanisms and strategies to ensure the solvency of national parks. The Project pilots economic growth activities with select target groups around two Bulgarian national parks. And it continues to build on the principles of strong public information and awareness as stepping stones for informed public engagement and promotion of biodiversity conservation and protected area management activities.

This Project is issued as a Task Order (Contract Number LAG-I-00-99-00013-00) under the USAID Global Biodiversity and Forestry Indefinite Quantities Contract (IQC); and is implemented on behalf of USAID by Associates in Rural Development, (ARD) Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, USA.

The Project is implemented through a Project Management Unit (PMU) based in Sofia, and includes a Team Leader, three Bulgarian technical specialists, and support staff. Project activities are coordinated through two mechanisms –

- (a) Project Counterpart Team – PMU staff and MOEW/NNPS counterparts
- (b) Project Coordination Group – that serves as a steering committee for Project planning and monitors implementation. This consists of the National Nature Protection Service of the MOEW, and national park directors, the PMU and USAID.

The Project is largely implemented through the Directorates for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks. Additional technical assistance is provided by Bulgarian and international consultants, and is based on specific terms of reference.

1.0 Introduction

BCEG Project activities are guided by a life of project work plan, implemented through an annual work plan. Reports regarding progress are required quarterly. At the time of submitting this quarterly report, the BCEG Annual Work Plan for May 2001 through April 2002, was not yet approved by USAID.

USAID manages this contract using two mechanisms – a project officer or Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) based in Washington D.C., and through the USAID Bulgaria's Environment and Natural Resources Specialist, attached to the Mission's program unit. The Project remains one of USAID-Bulgaria's "Special Initiatives and Cross-cutting Programs".

This quarterly report covers the three-month period, **November 2001 - January 2002**. Cost increases in medicines and electricity during this period are perceived as putting an additional burden on the Bulgarian public. Record low temperatures and heavy snows paralyzed much of the country's transport system during the holiday period. The opposition UDF party could bring a vote of "no confidence" as early as the next reporting period. Bulgaria's entrance into NATO and the EU features as a policy priority for the new government.

This reporting period is characterized by:

- Successful completion of the Ecotourism Study Tour for 13 Bulgarians to the United States – Washington, D.C. and Tennessee (November 3-17), culminated in a public presentation by the Samokov Ecotourism Initiative Group. Special guests included the USAID-Bulgaria Mission Director and Minister of Environment and Waters. A similar event is planned for Kalofer.
- National Park Directors develop new AOPs and submit capital development funding requests to the NEPF and BCEG Project. Annual activity reports are submitted in a timely and comprehensive fashion.
- A new Public Awareness and Information counterpart is appointed to the Project by the MOEW.
- First business plan development workshops to secure commercial loans for Ecotourism Initiative Groups members is held with the assistance of Firm Level Assistance Group (FLAG).
- GPS use successfully introduced and training completed for both national parks. New geo-referenced coordinates developed by the Project for all three parks – Rila Monastery, Rila and Central Balkan, now allows direct downloading of information to be compatible with Bulgarian Map coordinates. "Real time" GPS use is still some time in the future.
- National Park Endowment Fund concept developed and approved for further development and wider sharing by USAID and the Board of Directors of National Trust EcoFund.
- Extraordinary presentation of the results of the REA (Rila Monastery Nature Park fieldwork) presented to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.
- USAID host extraordinary meeting (January 16) of MOEW and MOAF officials to address participation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the management planning exercise for Rila Monastery, and to present results of REA
- Draft Environmental Protection Act is approved for plenary. Changes to the text governing the National Trust EcoFund could jeopardize the autonomy of the Fund and its attraction to donors.

- Draft Biodiversity Act is prepared for reading again in the Parliamentary Commission on Environment and Waters.

The Work Plan and Quarterly report format continues to reflect six contract results packages (CRP) – or distinct project themes. These include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Contract Result Package 1</i> | Finalize Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks, and Deliver to the Council of Ministers |
| <i>Contract Result Package 2</i> | Effective Management and Priority Actions of Management Plans Supported |
| <i>Contract Result Package 3</i> | Park-Related Eco-Enterprises Demonstrated for Ecotourism and Natural, Non-Timber Resources Collection |
| <i>Contract Result Package 4</i> | Mechanism for National Park Financial Sustainability Established |
| <i>Contract Result Package 5</i> | Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan Prepared |
| <i>Contract Result Package 6</i> | Public Awareness and Promotion Campaigns Implemented |

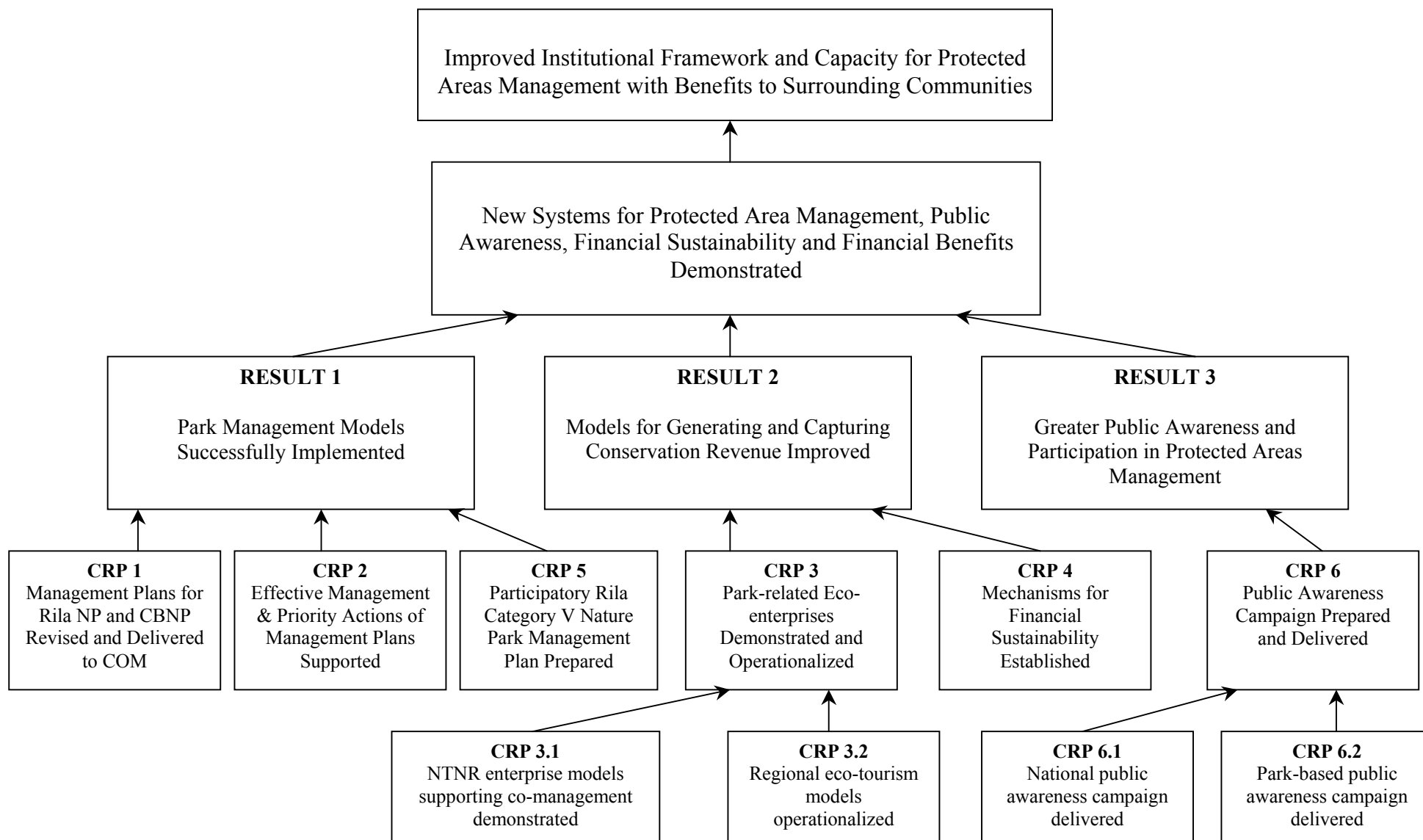
Additional planning and reporting themes include: Project management and Administration, Networking and Partnerships, and Special Project Issues.

2.0 Results Framework

The aim of the Project is to contribute to the improved institutional framework and capacity for protected areas management in Bulgaria with benefits to communities surrounding key protected area sites. A secondary objective is to demonstrate new systems for protected areas management, public awareness, financial sustainability and financial benefits. In order to achieve this hierarchy of objectives, the Project supports three direct results, or outcomes:

- Park management models are successfully implemented;
- Models for generating and capturing biodiversity conservation revenue are improved; and,
- Greater public awareness and participation is demonstrated in protected areas management

Project reporting is guided by the six results packages. Each quarterly reports uses the six results packages as the basis for a report on activities covered by the reporting period, quantifies results/activities, and identifies constraints to achievement of project targets. Finally, each result package includes recommendations for actions or amendments to work plan implementation that will guide activities during the following quarter, and/or life of project activities.

Figure 2.1 Results Framework

3.0 Planned Activities

Result 1 Park Management Models Successfully Implemented

This result is supported by three (3) contract results packages (sets of activities). These include:

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-October			Nov-Jan 2002			Feb-April		
1	Revise Management Plan for HEC	x											
	Revise MP based on HEC results		x										
	Reproduce MP in Bulgarian and English		x	x									
2	Capital Development Projects												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourist Management and Information Infrastructure for both Parks contracts and construction 	x	x										
	CBNP and RNP small projects (interp & ed) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals Approval Implementation Final reports 		x										
			x										
				x	x	x	x	x					
									x				
2	Capacity Development Projects												
	Medicinal Plant Management Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop with partners Field work Database additions Resource valuation Management Plan for commercial species (draft) Workshop for plan review Gap Analysis and Summer Field Work Needs Identified 			x									
				x									
					x								
						x							
							x						
								x					
									x				
										x			
											x		
												x	
	Ecological Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop to develop sets of key indicators for ecology & management plan monitoring Field work Data base – reports and review Additional Field Activities described 		x	x									
					x	x	x						
									x		x		
												x	

CRP	Activity	May- July			August- October			Nov-Jan 2002			Feb- April		
	GIS data base management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating borders Normalization of new Agroles data Unification of object classes Management zone cadaster completed GPS training GIS management training 		x	x	x	x	x	x					
			x		x	x	x	x					
					x	x			x				
					x	x			x		x		
	Ranger Training						x	x				x	
	Administrative Training						x				x		
	Proposal Development Training							x	x				
	NEW ENV. LEGISLATION – ORIENTATION AND T.A.						x	x		?	?		
5	Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan Preparation and Launch Activities		x										
	Rapid Assessment Exercises		x	x	x								
	Data Processing and analysis					x							
	Management Planning workshops						x	x	x	x			
	GIS Development							x	x			x	x
	Plan Writing										x	x	x
	Public Awareness												
	Preface		x										
	Phase 1			x			x	x					
	Phase 2								x	x			
	Phase 3												x

CRP 1 Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks Revised and Delivered to Council of Ministers for Approval.

There are no new activities to report from this Contract Result.

English language versions of the two management plans will be reproduced and distributed later in the year. They are presently being edited for language.

CRP 2 **Effective Management and Priority Actions of Management Plans Supported**

Implementation of Park Management plans continued during this reporting period.

2.1 Capital Investment Projects

Park investment projects continue to be funded from two sources – National Environment Protection Fund and the BCEG Project. BCEG Project funds use both the criteria and proposal formats indicated in the previous quarterly report. The following park projects continue to be supported by the BCEG Project. Some were completed during this reporting period, and some will be carried over into the FY 2002.

In addition, the BCEG Project conducted its annual budgeting and operations planning with the National Park Directors. This planning serves to guide joint activities, and well as BCEG Project resources for Park capital development projects. This planning informs GOB of the level and intent of USAID support. The balance of the annual capital development budget for each Park is then presented to the National Environment Protection Fund for support. This exercise was completed this reporting period. Final amounts of funding support from the BCEG Project and the National Environment Protection Fund will be confirmed during the next reporting period.

Both National Parks also provided copies of their annual activity reports. These are being translated.

Rila National Park

Rila NP 01	Tourist Picnic Areas	Proposed Budget 13,000 BGL	Actual Budget 13,450 BGL
Description/Comments: 25 picnic areas were planned, with 18 sets of picnic furniture produced; and four sets installed in the area of Beli Iskar. The remaining installation will be completed in the spring of 2002.			
Rila NP 02	Park Entrance Points	50,000 BGL	49,200 BGL
Description/Comments: 8 main entrances were planned and 8 produced, with one installed at the Maliovitsa trail head. 30 secondary entrances – all produced and ready for installation, and 35 tertiary entrance signs – production completed. Installation will commence next quarter, and the graphic elements for all sites will be completed during the next quarter.			
Rila NP 03	Visitor Management Signage	16,000 BGL	0 BGL
Description/Comments: Visitor management signs refer to the signboards used to explain park rules and regulations. The NNPS and Parks are presently working together to agree a set of icons/images that will be used throughout the national parks system, and become a standard for park/visitor management signage. Both Park Directors have worked together to design and agree a set of park standard signs/emblems for use throughout the Park system. The designs were formally submitted to the Minister of Environment and Waters for approval. An order should be issued, authorizing use of the signs as standard throughout the Park system. No expenditure was made on this activity during the Park's work year 2001, and the activity will be carried over to the new year (2002).			

Rila NP 06	Interpretation and Education Facilities	16,000 BGL	16,000 BGL
Description/Comments: These sites/facilities are being designed in conjunction with the Ecotourism Initiative Group of Samokov, in the northern section of Rila National Park. No new activities have been undertaken in this Project, due to other activities of the Ecotourism Initiative Group in Samokov.			
Rila NP 07	Conservation Education Materials	3,000 BGL	4,900 BGL
Description/Comments: A set of 10 lessons plans specific to Rila National Park complement the conservation education curriculum materials produced under the GEF Project. Designed by team of teachers and teacher trainers, these materials focus on primary education, biology, chemistry and computer skills. These will be distributed through the network of schools (150) surrounding the national park. Design of these materials has commenced with GOB funds, and the final products of the team's work will be printed using BCEG Project funds during the next quarter 2002.			
Rila NP 10	Visitor Information and Safety Materials	4,700 BGL	7,000 BGL
Description/Comments: The Directorate has completed production of all leaflets. There are nine in the series: (1) fire prevention, (2) tourist safety, (3) solid waste, (4) fishing, and (5) park zoning which is addressed by 5 leaflets. 1000 leaflets have been produced in favor of each theme. Distribution has been accomplished through the Park Visitor Center in Panichishte, as well as through each of the Park Sections, which have distributed them to chalets, rest houses and local hotels. This activity is completed successfully during this quarter. Photocopies of the set are included in Appendix 1 to this report.			
Rila NP 14	Management Zone Maps - Digitization	500 BGL	459.65 BGL
Description/Comments: Costs were paid to the Park for expert supervision of the digitization of management zone boundaries for the National Park to be added to the Park's GIS. This activity was completed during this period and copies presented to the Park Directorate and MOEW.			

Rila National Park – New Projects 2002

Park	Project	Proposed Budget	Actual
RNP 2002	Medicinal Plants Management Plan	10,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: Each National Park is required to produce a medicinal plants technical management plan according to the Law. Rila National Park will use this amount to develop the Terms of Reference for a comprehensive park-wide medicinal plants technical management plan to be conducted under the supervision of appropriate technicians from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Preliminary field exercises for medicinal plants in the multi-functional zones of the park will be conducted as a matter of priority.			

RNP 2002	Park Brochure	7,500 BGL	
Description/Comments: Rila National Park Directorate will produce new park brochures in at least two languages.			
RNP 2002	Tourism Infrastructure and Signage	68,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: The Directorate will use the most significant amount of BCEG Project funds allocated to this CRP for finishing off its park-wide tourism infrastructure and signage.			
RNP 2002	Waste Management	12,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: This program will consist of studies/designs and campaign for waste management in the park. Primary focus will be given to a campaign of carry –in carry-out, and designs developed for implementing improvements to solid waste and waste water from chalets.			

Central Balkan National Park

CB 04	Visitor Infrastructure - Kalofer	13,600 BGL	16,869 BGL
Description/Comments: Local purchase order with a contractor from Kalofer includes the production of 36 benches, 17 tables, 28 chairs, seven fire places, two pit latrines, 2 children's playgrounds, 3 water tap restorations. All elements were produced in a timely fashion and installed in preparation for the 10 th anniversary celebrations. Graphic elements/signage is outstanding due to technical problems. The graphic elements of all tourism signage should now be completed during the next reporting period.			
CB 08	Archaeological Inventory	3,000 BGL	2,850 BGL
Description/Comments: The archaeological inventory required under instruction of the Council of Ministers was successfully completed during the August period. An extensive report was completed with both the geographic locations of the inventory, as well as their significance. Both form the basis of a selective interpretive program for the National Park in the future. A final report has been provided, with copies sent to the Ministry of Culture, as well as the MOEW/NNPS. The Report serves as part of the Parks interpretive and signage activities. This activity is complete.			
CB 11	Portable Fauna Exhibit	2,200 BGL	2,780 BGL
Description/Comments: A subcontractor will finalize production of 6 (two sided) billboards presenting the fauna of CBNP and a leaflet representing the traveling exposition. The materials focus on primary and early - secondary levels. The exhibition will be used as a tool for realization of the nature conservation education program in the schools around the Park (about 100) and in the visitors centers of Karlovo and Ribaritsa. Completion of the project is expected in the next quarter. No progress was made on this activity.			

CB 12	Post Card set	4,000 BGL	4,000 BGL
<p>Description/Comments: A subcontractor will produce 1000 sets of post cards which will be distributed through the Park visitors' centers. 12 quality images of the CB National Park will be selected through a nationally announced competition for amateur and professional photographers. The NPD will have the rights to use them for future information and education materials production. Five people from the Park staff will be trained in taking photos. A Group of professional photographers will be identified as Park Directorate partners.</p> <p>To date, the competition for photos and pre-selection of winners were completed. Final winners will be selected in the next quarter and photos reproduced as postcards for promotion and publicity purposes. The Project is implemented by the National Park in conjunction with Borrowed Nature – an environmental NGO noted for is graphic and multi-media talents.</p> <p>This is one of two sales' tools (the other is a calendar) that Central Balkan National Park is using to generate revenue from park-related promotion and publicity tools. Sales are conducted by commissioned agents of the Park, and the proceeds generated are returned to a revolving fund within the National Environment Protection Fund for similar sales items. This is one of the new Park financial mechanisms in practice.</p>			
CB 16	Reserve Boundary Demarcation	7,000 BGL	8,700 BGL
<p>Description/Comments: Materials for reserve boundary demarcation were provided under this Project. National Parks supplied labor and transport. Boundary marking was completed during the summer months for the National Park's Reserve system. Only materials were provided. The Park and its partners supplied the labor. To date, 99.5 km of reserve boundaries have been marked. Another 152.5 km of reserve boundaries will be marked in the summer season of 2002.</p>			
CB 17	CBNP HQ Internet Connection	\$ USD 990.00	\$ USD 990.00
<p>Description/Comments: This project was added to the Park's project list. Significant investigations have been conducted to assure CNBP of a dependable, dedicated internet connection. This will be afforded through a radio modem. Procurement will proceed upon receipt of approval for equipment purchase.</p> <p><i>This activity was successfully completed during this reporting period. The equipment was purchased and installed. CBNP is now part of the "information highway", and regularly uses its internet access to communicate with partners both inside and outside Bulgaria.</i></p>			
CB 19	Management Zone Digitization	1,000 BGL	1309.54 BGL
<p>Description/Comments: Costs were paid to the Park for expert supervision of the digitization of management zone boundaries for the National Park to be added to the Park's GIS. This activity was completed during this period and copies presented to the Park Directorate and MOEW. Costs were higher than those for Rila because of the complex set of overlapping geo-reference coordinate sheets used in this Park.</p>			

Central Balkan National Park - New Projects 2002

Park	Project	Proposed Budget	Actual
CBNP	Medicinal Plants	10,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: Each National Park is required to produce a medicinal plants technical management plan according to the Law. Rila National Park will use this amount to develop the Terms of Reference for a comprehensive park-wide medicinal plants technical management plan to be conducted under the supervision of appropriate technicians from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Preliminary field exercises for medicinal plants in the multi-functional zones of the park will be conducted as a matter of priority.			
CBNP	Tourism Management and Information Infrastructure	89,100 BGL	
Description/Comments: This Project will consolidate all the outstanding activities of 2001, and to them add the development of new infrastructure for all main park entrance, secondary entrances, view points, rest areas, etc. Separate purchase orders will be used to contract construction services from municipalities to the north and south of the Park.			
CBNP	Web Site Design and Development	5,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: Central Balkan will be first national park to develop and maintain a web site in two languages. The website will be hotlinked to other websites in Sofia, and managed and maintained through a commercial service.			
CBNP	Cherni Ossam Tourism Catalog and CD	4,000 BGL	
Description/Comments: This is the final set of tourism inventory materials to be produced in favor of municipalities surrounding Central Balkan National Park. Design and production of a catalog and CD is part of the Parks partnership with the Troyan municipality, and ecotourism development on the north side of the Park.			

2.2 Training

Training activities continued to form a part of this quarter's activities.

Medicinal Plants Management	Phase 1	\$ USD 3,200	Actual	\$ USD 3,093
Description/Comments: Completed last quarter in support of the blueberry resource assessment.				
Management Plan Training for the Park Staff (Rangers) of CBNP	Planned	3,700 BGL	Actual	3,796.50 BGL
Description/Comments: Completed during the last quarter.				

National Parks GIS	Budget 2001	\$ USD 21,000	Actual (to date)	\$ USD 20,043
<p>Description/Comments:</p> <p>Training in the use of GPS units and the downloading of data using GPS Pathfinder Office, version 2.8 for Trimble Navigation Ltd., software, as well as the use of transformation software “WGS 84”-1970 and vice-versa, was completed for six participants. 2 experts from each Park 1 expert from the NNPS, and 1 expert from the Executive Environmental Agency.</p> <p>Training was conducted under a purchase order.</p> <p>Park Management Zone digitization is reported under each Park’s project activities, and was completed during this reporting period.</p> <p>Transformation software, allowing for the GPS unit information to be successfully down-loaded and used in the Bulgarian coordinate system was finalized during this reporting period. The final products include:</p> <p>3 users guides: (1) work with GeoExplorer 3 GPS receivers (2) work with Pathfinder Office software (3) working with transformation software for geo-referencing</p> <p>Finally, the conversion software allowing data transformation from Autodesk LDD (Park based GIS operating software) to FRZ-EF formats (those used by the Ministry of Agriculture/Land Commission) was completed during this reporting period.</p> <p>BCEG Project PMU Biodiversity Specialist, Dimitrina Boteva conducted trips to both national parks to work with park specialists to develop the parameters for digitizing the management zones for both parks. The results of the exercise are now incorporated in law, and registered with the MOEW’s Higher Expert Council.</p>				

Ecological Monitoring	Planned	\$ USD 12,000	Actual	TBD
<p>Description/Comments:</p> <p>The ecological monitoring planning activities have commenced with discussion with National Park Directorate experts. These will be followed up with Directorate visits early in the next reporting period. It is expected that the program will be divided between:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. non-timber commercial resource assessment 2. tourism distribution and impact monitoring using limits of acceptable change methodology 3. long-term ecological monitoring selecting abiotic and biotic indicators. <p>Please see the description of the Ecological Monitoring Work Plan in the last quarterly report for a more detailed schedule of proposed activities.</p>				

Work Plan Implications: None

CRP 5 Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan Prepared

The following major activities were undertaken during this reporting period:

- 1. The Rapid Ecological Assessment** results were placed into the Park's data base and a preliminary analysis completed. The results form the basis form statements of significance regarding the territory and its natural values.

Additional aspects of the Rapid Ecological Assessment **consisted of five major socio-economic** field-based exercises. These were:

- Tourist survey consisting distribution patterns, KAP (knowledge, attitudes and practices), and impacts
- Local population resource use practices and dependence;
- Socio-economic profile of surrounding municipalities;
- Development activities and expectations (scoping activity with Municipalities);
- Financial values arising from present practices;

The results of this survey were presented at the REA analysis workshop consisting of the full Rapid Ecological Assessment Team, in October. Results included species and habitat assessments, a threats analysis, draft zone scheme, and partial financial analysis.

Further data analysis was conducted in November, allowing for a full assessment of conservation values associated with the terrain. The results have been structured in a set of significance statements.

- 2. December 13, 2001 - Bulgarian Orthodox Church - representatives of the Holy Synod, receive first report on assessment of REA results.**

The BCEG Project Team Leader and select members of the PMU and CPT presented the results of the fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2001. Representatives from the Synod included the Metropolitans of Lovech, Varna and Gotse Delchev. The Abbot of Rila Monastery was absent from the presentation. The results of this meeting are inconclusive, but this is clearly the first time that the BOC has been willing to listen to the role and responsibility of an outside institution to the management planning issues affecting Rila Monastery territories.

- 3. Delegation forms Special Commission** - Appeals from the Abbot of Rila Monastery to the Prime Minister, resulted in the formation of a special delegation consisting of the Ministers of Environment and Waters, and Agriculture and Forests (accompanied by 2 deputy ministers of AF – M. Ploukchieva and Nahit Kabil), to the Monastery, on September 28th. The Delegation was empowered to investigate the prevailing issues of the Abbot surrounding land restitution, represent the Government, and make recommendations to the Government on land restitution issues. The Delegation immediately recommended the formation of a Special Commission to address matters of land restitution, illegal construction, and ownership issues within the Nature Park/Monastery territory. The results of this Commission's work are summarized in a protocol received by the Project in late January 2002. In large part, the results of this Commission's work need to be implemented by Rila Municipality, and the Government's Special Commission on Illegal Construction.

4. January 16, 2002 USAID host inter-ministerial meeting to address issues of Church participation in the Management Plan.

In order to explore opportunities and strategies for engaging the BOC in the Rila Monastery Nature Park management planning effort, USAID hosted an inter-ministerial meeting of the MOAF and MOEW. Minutes of the meeting are presented in **Appendix 2**. Results of the REA fieldwork and analysis were presented to both Ministries. The MOAF responded with information regarding technical plans being developed for forest management and hunting/gaming on the territory, and offered to share them. The results of the Special Commission were also offered for our review. This was the first time that any activities related to the Rila Monastery Territory had been made available to the Core Planning Team for the Nature Park.

5. Digital Model of the Agroles Forest Inventory 2000, is finally secured by the CPT.

After 6 months of repeated efforts, the CPT secured the digital model of the most recent forest inventory for the forested lands of the Rila Monastery Nature Park. This model should represent the most recent MOAF inventory activities on the territory. This work commenced in May 2000, and was completed a year later. The BCEG Project TOR for the Nature Park states that both the inventory and the digital model that supports it will be made available to the BCEG Project management planning effort. This data is the most comprehensive inventory of forest habitat, and includes some 50-60 separate attributes. It forms an essential part of the planning tools.

In addition, the Agroles 2000 Forestry Inventory should include a reconciliation of the land commission information and the forestry estate information. The digital model should provide an exact definition of boundaries on lands that are restituted and covered by forest.

6. Rila Monastery Nature Park Data base and GIS – the natural history (botany and zoology) data have been developed to include earlier information from resource base inventory work conducted for Rila National Park under the GEF Project, and the REA activities of 2001. This new database form one of the most comprehensive data bases for protected areas in the country, and will support applications in GIS. The databases were completed with the expert assistance of database managers from the Institute of Zoology and Botany, of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

A working team of the Rila Monastery Nature Park data base designer and the socio-economic survey team have completed incorporation of the REA information sets for tourist distribution, density, impacts, and local uses.

The data sets now allow us to overlap the GPS information collected during 2001, with the GEF Project data sets for high mountain and sub-alpine areas, the Agroles Project Data sets – (Inventory 2000), and the topography maps for the area. The resulting GIS is a sound planning platform for mapping, illustration, queries, and management planning. These data sets will be merged in one GIS for the RMNP during the next quarter.

Work Plan Implications: *Recent events at the end of January indicate the BOC may be willing to engage in some form of management planning. If this is the case, then the RMNP has a chance to occur within the Project's remaining time frame. The stumbling blocks remain the intransigence, caution, and restitution issues of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. We still remain optimistic that we can successfully engage all stakeholders in the management planning process; but we believe that matters of restitution can still derail the process. The next quarter will determine the likelihood of developing a management plan product that has some chance of being used to guide conservation activities and investments.*

Result 2 Models for Generating and Capturing Biodiversity Conservation Revenue are Improved

Two-contract results packages (1) for Eco-enterprise, consisting of non-timber natural resource management and ecotourism (CRP 03a and 3b), and (2) for Financial Mechanisms (CRP 04) support this result:

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-Oct			Nov –Jan 2002			Feb-April		
3a	NTNR												
	Phase 1 (complete)												
	Phase 2												
	▪ Rapid rural assessment (complete)												
	▪ Situation analysis Survey (complete)												
	▪ Survey analysis and report	x	x										
	Phase 3												
	▪ Local NTNR action plan for each pilot area			x	x								
	Phase 4												
	▪ Collector Training				x	x	x						
	▪ Community Education				x	x							
	▪ Resource Monitoring Prog					x	x	x					
	▪ Capitalization identified				x			x					
	▪ Enterprises Identified and Assisted				x								
	▪ Identify market opportunities							x	x	x			
	▪ New Harvest Season Action Plans developed										x	x	x
3b	Ecotourism												
	Phase 1 (complete)												
	Phase 2 (complete)												
	Phase 3 – Models												
	▪ Action Planning	x	x										
	▪ Baseline data collection	x	x	x									
	▪ Publicity and information development		x	x	x								
	▪ Product Development		x	x									
	Phase 4												
	▪ Market Studies (regional)				x	x							
	▪ Product Implementation				x	x	x						
	Phase 5												
	▪ Business Planning					x	x	x					
	▪ Business Financing							x	x				
	Training							x	x		x	x	
	Park Tourism Cluster Meetings					x		x				x	

CRP	Activity	May- July			August- Oct			Nov –Jan 2002			Feb- April		
4	Innovative Financing												
	Concept paper for NFMF concept			x									
	Appoint NFMF and launch meeting				x								
	Requests for Proposals design (venture capital fund)					x							
	Selection of award(s)							x					
	Concession Policy review complete									x			
	Permit system review complete												
	AOPs and funding proposals from CBNP and Rila reviewed and endorsed as necessary.									x	x		
	Completion of recommendation on NEPF and NET												x
	Task Force Meetings				x			x			x		

CRP 3 Park-Related Eco-Enterprises Demonstrated for Ecotourism and Natural, Non-Timber Resources Collection

CRP 3a Non-Timber Natural Resources (NTNR)

The three-volume compendium for Non-Timber Natural Resources and National Parks was completed this quarter. It was published and distributed to all MOEW national and regional stakeholders. The BCEG Project hosted an MOEW working session to discuss the opportunities and options for implementing the major recommendations coming from the 6 months of fieldwork and local discussion.

The BCEG Project was approached by the largest buyer/exporter of wild berries from the national parks – particularly Central Balkan National Park. In response to discussions with Parks and BCEG for opportunities to secure commercial harvesting contracts, the firm offered their vision concerning a private-public partnership. This overture begins to confirm the possibility of private public agreements for wild resource collection that is aimed at providing social and capital benefits to local communities surrounding the parks. The concept has generated additional interest from the company's Chief Executive in Italy "Rigoni Di Asiago", who visited the BCEG Project offices in December, to learn more of the dimensions of this partnership.

The final decision to introduce experimental changes to the permit system and to experiment with a commercial contract for commercially viable wild resources now rests in the hands of the Ministry. Both National Park Directors are avid proponents of the changes, and will be encouraging the MOEW to take up the recommendations as a matter of priority.

Work Plan Implications: *The Project will work with both Directorates and the pilot program areas to:*

- 1. prepare for the next season of wild resource assessment in the pilot areas;*
- 2. to share the results of the field work with rural communities in the pilot program catchment areas.*
- 3. To develop a local program of public information, collection education, and training regarding a host of issues arising from control and management of wild resources in the pilot program areas. Training will focus on both park rangers and local collectors.*
- 4. Assist the Directorates and MOEW to develop a commercial harvest contract for experimental use in one or both of the Parks in advance of the July collection season.*

CRP 3b Ecotourism

Both Initiative Groups and the National Working Group were extremely active this reporting period.

Within the pilot program areas, each Initiative Groups held between 8-10 meetings. The focused on:

- Analysis of the results of the catalytic events conducted in the previous quarter;
- The results of the exit surveys and questionnaires;
- Ecotourism products development and marketing survey preparation
- Future of the of the institutionalization of the initiative groups
- Training needs assessment
- Preparation for the business planning workshop, jointly hosted by BCEG and FLAG at the end of January 2002

The National Working Groups held 5 working meetings in preparation for the study tour, the market survey tools development, and the public presentations of the study tour. The Training Implementation Plan for the study tour is presented in **Appendix 3**.

◆ Study Tour and Public Presentation

12 participants (2 from the national level – MOEW and MOE, were joined by 4 national park staff and 6 local business representatives on a 14 days study tour to the USA – specifically Washington DC and the State of Tennessee). They were joined by the Project's intermittent ecotourism consultant, Nelly Georgieva. She has produced a separate report of the Study Tour.

The Study Tour Group developed action plans during the Study Tour, and refined them on return to Bulgaria.

The Samokov Ecotourism Initiative Group made a public presentation of their results and plans to the community of Samokov in the presence of local mayors, the Director of USAID, Minister of Environment and Waters, on January 16, 2002. A similar event will be held in Kalofer, Central Balkan National Park region, in February/March.

◆ Business Planning

13 Participants from the two initiative groups developed and refined 13 business ideas at A business-planning workshop (January 29-31) hosted by FLAG and the BCEG Project.

◆ Participation at Training Events

4 people from the initiative groups - to a Bulgarian Spanish training course, on product development, organized by the Ministry of Economy.

◆ International Consultant

14-day domestic SOW was approved for Don Hawkins, the Project's Ecotourism Consultant. Dr. Hawkins has completed his first task for the Ministry of Economy, and submitted his professional suggestions for development of a national data base for ecotourism – called, "Smartinfo"

Work Plan Implications: Marketing survey tools are being finalized and will be administered using a local contract with a market survey team, during the next quarter. The survey will focus on Bulgarian tourists, and their expectations for short and long-term stays in areas bordering the national parks. The results will be used to inform the public about parks and local tourism opportunities in a series of travel supplements to national papers. In addition, the results will be used to help shape and market new products among the Initiative Groups and National Parks.

Baseline Data Collection - Baseline data collection using the indicators for social impacts and economic growth (developed with the Initiative Groups and Prof. Hawkins) will be the basis for a series of field exercises conducted in cooperation with the University of Sofia's Tourism Department. These are expected to start at the beginning of the next plan period.

Ecotourism Cluster Task Force – A series of national ecotourism cluster meetings will be conducted over the next quarter to commence with development of the international ecotourism event scheduled for October this year. The Group will refine the ecotourism cluster concept paper, develop a working TOR, and set the agenda of events and topics for further developing a focus on the niche market of protected areas and ecotourism. Formation of this task force was delayed by the Christmas season and member's respective obligations.

Business Plans Action Agenda – The BCEG Project will work with FLAG to evaluate all business plan prospects after the end of the workshop, and to develop a priority list for action. Action steps should include a ranking of business prospects, commercial loan opportunities, and needs for further TA.

CRP 4 Mechanism for National Park Financial Sustainability Established

Financial Mechanisms Addressed to Date:

Concessions – rejected as impractical and inappropriate for National Parks at the present time. Concessions typically deal with a minimum of 35 years, and with a 15-year renewable option. There is nothing in the Park system that would benefit from the duration and tenets of this tool.

Commissions/Commercial Contracts – These have been investigated for goods and services related to short-term park goods and services. These are considered appropriate for activities governed by a contract agreement that can be reviewed annually and renewed, perhaps, every five years. These tools may be appropriate for commercial, renewable non-timber natural resource harvesting, tourism services, tourist facilities, and promotional items available for sale. We are supporting the development of these commission contract tools as a priority. Their development will commence with a legal analysis of the opportunities for contracting with changes to primary legislation.

Commissions have already been used as an income generation tools in the Central Balkan for the sale of calendars and postcards. Rila National Park is using a similar tool for the sale of its new maps. We will continue to support the development of model contracts for tourism services and facilities through our Ecotourism Initiative Group, and NTNR enterprise efforts.

National Environment Protection Fund - Major changes to the operations and management of this Fund developed during this reporting period. The Fund no longer has its discretionary powers, and is now a part of the State Budget. The BCEG Project joined with MOEW to secure a regular commitment of funding to National Parks – at approximately 1 million BGL per year. At present, it appears that the NEPF will make a concerted attempt to maintain this funding level for National Parks over the next years. The Project continues to support arguments demonstrating the efficiency of GOB investments in National Parks. Direct cash contributions to local livelihoods (through NTNR collection) are being realized more efficiently and effectively than through any other government land management policy.

Revolving Fund – Revenue generation from national parks accrues to the NEPF, and now forms part of the national allocation of funds from the NEPF to Parks. In effect, this is the beginning of a revolving fund – with at least partial incentive given to Parks to raise funds. With the assurance that money that they raise will contribute to their annual capital fund allocation, Parks are feeling more assured that sound income generation practices can result in more secure funding.

National Parks Fund - Given the mainstream nature of the NEPF, there is little opportunity to create any more flexibility or creativity with Government funding mechanisms. Instead, the BCEG Project worked with the NEPF, and the National Trust EcoFund (NTEF) to test the idea of a separate National Parks Fund without creating new administrations or legislation. The result is the National Parks Fund Concept Paper. The Paper is the product of 8 meetings with government representative organized as a working group to refine the concept before formal presentation to USAID, the Board of the National Trust EcoFund, and Government of Bulgaria. The “fund” concept was considered appropriate for Bulgaria by the working group, and appropriate to the future of the NTEF in a Board of Directors decision taken on January 29th. USAID-Bulgaria approved the concept as worth pursuing in January 2002.

The future of the Fund concept now lies with development the final text for the Draft Environmental Protection Act. Changes to the text of the draft Act presently jeopardize the flexibility and semi-autonomous nature of the Fund. Once this issue is cleared up, it will be necessary to develop a “draft” operational framework, to ensure compliance of the Fund within the NTEF, and to ensure its operations as an endowment. The BCEG Project will work with international consultant assistance and the Executive Director of the NTEF to develop the structure and guidelines for the new Fund. We will also assess the interest and willingness of the international donor community and GOB to capitalize the fund – and to see what safeguards they require if funding is offered.

Work Plan Implications: *Jay Lee will join the Senior Team Leader to conduct a series of visits to potential donors. The meetings will be used to assess donor interest and support for the National Parks Fund and to ascertain their concerns and constraints. Jared Hardner will return in March to further develop an operational model for the proposed endowment Fund. We will host a major meeting in the first half of March to assess GOB and Donor concerns in a public review of the proposal.*

Result 3 Greater Public Awareness and Participation is Demonstrated in Protected Area Management

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-Oct			Nov-Jan 2002			Feb-April		
6	Public Awareness												
	National Press Campaigns												
	▪ Market study (national)				x	x							
	▪ Newspaper supplements on tourism and ecotourism											x	x
	▪ PA Laws preparation				x			x	x	x	x		
	Public Information Access												
	▪ Multi-media CD					x	x						
	▪ National Parks Website								x	x			
	Green Media												
	▪ Green Journalist Club meetings			x			x			x			x
	▪ Feature Articles			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	▪ Media Monitoring	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	▪ Opinion Makers event							x					
	Decision Makers												
	▪ Decision Makers event at Parliament							x					
	▪ Decision makers field trips						x						x

CRP 6 Public Awareness Campaign Implemented

6.1 Work with the “Green Media Machine”

Work with journalists has resulted in:

1. One, full-page article in the nation's largest weekly newspaper Trud, concerning the Ecotourism efforts, Study Tour, local business, and Rila National Park. The feature article on Hristo Koniarski, was published on January 10.
2. A new series of eight broadcasts entitled “Green Gold Bulgaria” have started appearing on the national radio program “Hristo Botev” The 30-minute programs focus on the national parks and reserves of Bulgaria. Programs aired on the national broadcast have been developed in cooperation with the project's Education and Communication Specialist.
3. Thirteen separate meetings were organized and supported by the Project in order to bring the national radio broadcast to fruition.

6.2 Monthly press monitoring reports

Monthly media press monitoring has been conducted during the quarter. The results of the monitoring program are synthesized, reported and shared with the MOEW, USAID and the American Embassy. Three reports have been completed for the period in both English and Bulgarian.

6.3 Work on the Multimedia Presentation of the National Parks

Significant progress has been made of the design and development of the National Park multimedia CD. A cooperative agreement has been reached with the Bulgarian Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Program for co-sponsorship of the final product. The BSBCP will contribute a third of production costs, and participated in the selection of the producer.

The Project's Education and Communication specialist has conducted more than 35 meeting in support of the CD's preparation. Final production is expected in February, with CD music, voice, script, graphics and packaging completed. The final product will be launched in Bulgarian with the cooperation of the MOEW and Commission on Environment and Waters, in a presentation to the National Assembly. *It will be distributed internationally with the assistance of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

6.4 Rila Monastery Nature Park

The Project's specialist supervised the production of the messages and media that will be used to support presentation of the REA results from this summer's fieldwork. Preparations include a set of summary materials for management planning stakeholders, a press conference, press release, press kit, and power-point presentation on the results of the REA. The public awareness and information campaign will be launched in February with the press conference.

6.5 Market Survey

The PMU specialist participated in the development of the market survey tools for ecotourism. The results of the survey will be used to inform a series of national newspaper supplements on national travel, ecotourism, and national parks, with a focus on the Bulgarian domestic market. Information gathered by the national market survey will assist the targeting of these messages.

6.6 MOEW Appoints New Press and PR Officer

In an official response to the appointment of government counterparts to the BCEG Project, the MOEW has officially replaced Katia Shavuluva (on maternity leave) with Rossa Trichkova. The Project's Education and Communication specialist has conducted several meetings with the new PR officer at the Ministry to both orient her to the Project's activities, and to work together on some press releases directly related to the MOEW's activities in Parks and in ecotourism.

6.7 Decision and Opinion Makers

The orientation and publicity activities aimed at the National Assembly and parliamentarians have been postponed until March, at the request of the Chairman of the Commission on Environment and Waters. Present efforts are aimed at launching the multi-media CD presentation to the National Assembly in early March, in celebration of the Rila and Central Balkan National Park 10th Anniversary celebrations, as well as progress made on the Biodiversity Conservation Act.

4.0 Project Management and Administration

4.1 Project Coordination and Supervision

The following meetings and events are noteworthy during this period:

- **November 4 - USAID Environmental Assessment Team** - the Project's CTO was joined by Greg Meyers and Jeff Ploetz and conducted a two-week environmental assessment for USAID-Bulgaria, as part of the Mission's 5-year strategic planning efforts.
- **December 4 – UNDP/IUCN Financial Mechanisms Team** briefed on activities conducted and already supported by BCEG and GEF projects in favor of biodiversity conservation financial mechanisms.
- **December 5 - UNDP/IUCN Financial Mechanisms Launch Workshop.** UNDP (using a TOR developed and supported by BCEG 2 years previously), launches its financial mechanisms activities in support of incentives and opportunities for financing biodiversity conservation outside of protected areas.
- **December 10-18** – CTO Alicia Grimes returns to Bulgaria to finalize the Environmental Assessment, and offer technical guidance on BCEG Project issues.
- **December 14** - BCEG Project Senior Team Leader meets with USAID Director, the Project's CTO and USAID Program staff to advise on Bulgarian Orthodox Church participation in Rila Monastery Nature Park management planning. Meeting used to construct a strategy to solicit MOEW and MOAF support for engaging the Monastery.
- **January 16, 2002** – USAID hosted meeting with MOAF and MOEW to develop a strategy for engaging Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the Rila Monastery Management Planning effort. Minutes are attached as **Appendix 2**.
- **January 23** - Samokov Ecotourism Initiative Group launches action plan and briefs public on events of the United States Ecotourism Study Tour. Mission Director McFarland, and Minister of Environment and Waters, Arsenova attend.

4.2 Project Staffing

No changes to Project national staff are noted.

4.3 Office

No changes to arrangements or temporary personnel noted.

4.4 Equipment

Internet connection hardware (radio modem, receiver, software, and antenna) was purchased for Central Balkan National Park during this reporting period. The Park now had dedicated line for accessing the World Wide Web - previously almost impossible given the telephone exchange system in Gabrovo.

6 pairs of snowshoes were purchased for winter monitoring activities in Rila National Park.

4.5 International Technical Assistance

Professor Donald Hawkins has received approval for 14 days of domestic consulting in favor of a SOW for the BCEG Project.

4.6 National Technical Assistance

A total of 85 person days have been paid during this reporting period.

	Activity	Days
1.	GIS consultant	9
2.	Marketing specialist technical assistance	19.98
3.	NTNR Situation Analysis – macro and pilot area assessments	20
4.	Ecotourism Catalog consultant	3
5.	GIS consultant	9
6.	Rila Monastery planning team member	10
7.	Ecotourism intermittent consultant	20
8.	Literature review and analysis of the dependence of wildlife on <i>Vaccinium sp.</i>	3

4.7 Purchase Orders

The following professional service contracts (purchase orders) were issued in favor of:

Contractor/Grantee	Services	Date
Boyan Dobrev	Multi-Media CD for Bulgarian National Parks	December 1, 2001-January 31, 2002
Bulgarian Geo-Information Company	Training for field data collection with GPS	September 25, 2001-January 31, 2002

4.8 International Training and Workshop Events

Ecotourism Study Tour (TRANSIT GRANT) of 12 participants, was completed in November 3-17.

4.9 International Travel

Nelli Georgieva – Intermittent Consultant and Ecotourism Initiative Group Facilitator traveled to the United States with the TRANSIT Grant Ecotourism Study Tour in early November. The BCEG Project paid her costs.

4.10 Networking and Partnerships

International Donors

Project coordination with UNDP continues relative to three of their biodiversity support activities:

- ✓ An assessment of opportunities for financial incentives as tools in biodiversity conservation outside of Protected areas; The project attended a number of meetings with visiting UNDP consultants to elaborate the Project's contributions to the study of financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation in national parks;
- ✓ GEF Project developments in the Rhodopes. The UNDP/GEF Rhodopes Project officially began during this reporting period, with appointment of a three-person project design team, and 5 sub-contracts awarded for information collection to Bulgarian environmental NGOs.

Coordination with BSBCP continued primarily on matters related to Pirin National Park Management plan development, and the national parks multi-media CD. (see CRP 6 – multimedia CD).

Government Policy and NGOS

The PMU again spent time (between 5-8 days) tracking and monitoring changes to evolving environmental legislation. Specifically the Project is reviewing revisions to the Environment Protection Act (framework environmental legislation), the Biodiversity Conservation Act, and the Concessions Act. All three policy pieces have a direct and immediate impact on national parks, and results associated with this Project.

The Project continued to coordinate its concerns and input into the draft Biodiversity Conservation Act, through a consortium of environmental NGOs, spearheaded by the BSPB. Most comments and concerns continue to be successfully negotiated with the drafting team, and reflected in the draft legislation that will be tabled next quarter.

The EPA passed its first committee hearing in January, and is now being discussed in plenary. We will continue to monitor changes for their impacts to the Environmental Funds.

APPENDIX 1

Rila National Park

Visitor Information and Safety Materials

MINUTES OF MEETING
To Discuss Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Planning Process
USAID office, 16 January, 2002

Participants:

USAID	Mrs. D. MacFarland Mr. Jay Lee Mrs. I. Tsankova
MoEW	Minister Arsenova Deputy Minister F. Iliaz Mr. Bojinov Head of NNPS
MoAF	Deputy Minister Mr. N. Kabil, Mr. N. Yonov – Head of International Dpt., NFB Mr. I. Angelov – Head of Dpt. “Management and register of forest fund”
NFB	Mrs. A. Petrakieva – senior expert, International Dpt., NFB Mr. V. Marinkovski – Head RFB – Kyustendil Mr. Damianov – Head game breeding station “Studena”, Kyustendil
BCEG	Mr. Peter Hetz – Senior Resident Advisor Mrs. Dimitrina Boteva – biodiversity specialist

Mrs. MacFarland:	Welcome and opening remarks.
Mrs. Arsenova:	Expressed her gratitude of being invited to the meeting and insure her interest about the topic of the meeting and willingness to work towards solution of the problem.
Mr. Hetz:	Presented the current situation on the management planing process and what is the problem encountered by BCEG project with the participation of the main stakeholder - the Bulgarian Orthodox Church
Minister Arsenova:	Reminded of her participation in the meeting with Abbot John in Rila Monastery. The purpose of the meeting was how to optimize the process of restitution of Monastery lands. Minister Arsenova declared that the interest of MOEW is the Rila Monastery Forest Reserve in particular as well as returning the Monastery lands issues. She stressed the importance of management plan development.

MOEW has done 2 important steps:

- Personal discussion between Minister Arsenova and Abbot John where he agreed to participate personally in the planning team. Letter followed this conversation from Minister Arsenova with thanks for the personal involvement of Abbot John.
- Letter to the Holy Synod suggesting to participate in the MP process.

Minister Arsenova expressed her disappointment that what she had understood to be reality, the participation of Abbot John in the planning process, was not to be realized.

She suggested initiating a new meeting with the Abbot and representatives of the Holy Synod.

This is to be a first step before a meeting between the three interested parties – MoEW, MoAF and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Minister Arsenova had to leave the meeting.

Deputy Minister Kabil:

As a member of the group that visited Rila Monastery he confirmed the main issues discussed there and the main problems with the restitution: illegal building; the Rila Monastery reserve lands; the ownership of the whole amount of lands.

Mr. Kabil agreed that the restitution should be in full extent and expressed his concern that this will be a long process. He admitted as well that there are mistakes in the restitution process concerning lands and property claimed by the Monastery and reminded that part of the problems are addressed as well from the Ministry of Regional Planning and its Agency of building control.

Mr. Kabil recognized the importance of the management plan as guiding the future management of the territory.

The meetings between the MoAF representatives and the Abbot show that the Abbot agrees to participate into the management planning process and is positive about it, but he insisted that first ownership problems be resolved.

Deputy Minister Iliaz:

MoEW is concerned about the Rila Monastery forest reserve. The Protected Areas Act (PAA) does not provide for obligatory participation of the stakeholders in the planning process, but MoEW considers that it is important for the success of the plan. A better idea is to involve the owners in the planning. Unfortunately the ownership problems can not be resolved during the development of the Management plan.

Mr. Angelov, Mr. Yonov: Conclusion is drawn that all efforts are involved to convince the Monastery to participate in the planning process. A Permanent Special Commission dealing with Monastery issues has been established and is working in the NFB.

The multi-institutional expert commission created after the visit to the Monastery prepared a protocol on the current status of restitution and recommends decisions including destruction of illegal buildings, restriction of their operation or advice to the Monastery to put them to the court.

Concerning the Reserve, Abbot John has sent a letter to the Prime Minister and the Parliament with suggestions for changes in the legal status of the Reserve in order to make restitution possible. The idea is to keep the natural status of the reserve as a reserve, but to find a way to return its ownership to the church.

Mr. Marinkovski: Abbot John agrees to take part in the planning process after all property issues are resolved.

Restituted are forests from the Forestry Unit “Rila Monastery” with total area of 96,901 dka. According to a decision of the expert commission 200 dkas more will be restituted, which are nurseries.

The illegal buildings are going to be demolished or stopped of operation. In 5 or 6 cases the commission recommended to the Monastery to start legal procedures for ownership rights to be enforced.

In November a working group was created in the NFB, which has to analyze and propose to the Monastery different management options for management of the Monastery forests according to the legal provisions.

- Economical evaluations have been done for assigning 1 or 2 foresters to take care of the territory.
- Assessment also has been prepared of the resources needed for implementation of the suggested management activities in the Monastery forests.

It has been discussed that the game breeding station “Studena” to be contracted to supervise the implementation of the proposed management plan.

The Abbot and the Synod lawyer have requested a contact draft between them and the game station to be prepared for review. The draft was issued before Christmas.

- Deputy Minister Iliaz:** Rejected possibility of restituting the reserve lands.
- The condition of the Monastery to participate is thus, but it is against the law and it will make a precedent. If the reserve is restituted, it will be attacked by the international and national communities.
- MoEW offers to include representatives of the Monastery in the reserve management with the cost for this to be covered by the ministry.
- Deputy Minister Kabil:** A separate piece of legislation has been discussed in the past about Rila Monastery. Abbot John does not argue about the “reserve status”, but about the property rights. The situation is very delicate – this is the Holy Synod.
- Deputy Minister Iliaz:** Expressed the willingness of the MoEW to assist to MoAF to find the best solution of the issue.
- A new law for the Rila Monastery can avoid a precedent to change the status of an exclusive state property land such as a strict Reserve.
- Deputy Minister Kabil:** MoAF shares the idea for a separate law for Rila Monastery. The deputy minister expressed his vision that the Monastery at a minimum deserves a particular law.
- The ownership of lands around the Monastery is a difficult problem due to the strong economic interests that exist there. These are commercial and corporate interests and not spiritual.
- Mrs MacFarland:** Reminded that a Working Group existed for the preparation of the Terms of Reference. Mrs. MacFarland proposed the Working Group to be established again and to deal with the issues in a complex way. The two deputy ministers were asked to assign representatives from their respective ministries.
- Deputy Minister Iliaz:** Suggested the Working Group to have lawyers who should work on the legal part of the problem
- Deputy Minister Kabil:** The lawyers should find contacts and clarify the need of a law for the Rila Monastery. He shared his believe that such a law will be broadly accepted and supported from the whole Parliament.
- Finally it has been agreed by the end of the week of 21 February 2002 the participants of the Working Group from the two ministries to be identified and USAID to be informed.
- By the end of February the Working Group should start working and have a first meeting.

Training Implementation Plan (TIP) for Ecotourism – Bulgaria

Supplied by World Learning, TRANSIT program training management group.

Participant Names and ID Numbers			
Rayna Hardalova	GTBU005932	Hristo Konyarski	GTBU005938
Dessislava Mihalkova	GTBU005933	Radka Moskova	GTBU005939
Petya Kovacheva	GTBU005934	Ivan Stoynev	GTBU005940
Stefan Kirilov	GTBU005935	Donka Ivanova	GTBU005941
Nanko Minkov	GTBU005936	Dobrinka Tsutsova	GTBU005942
Vladimir Chapkunski	GTBU005937	Toncho Tonchev	GTBU005943

Nelli Georgieva – BCEG Project Ecotourism Intermittent Consultant, accompanied the Study Tour Group, at the expense of the BCEG Project.

Itinerary

Saturday, Nov. 3

--Travel from Sofia, Bulgaria to Dulles, DC--

Flight Schedule:

Lufthansa #LH3513

Depart Sofia: 07:15

Arrive Munich: 08:20

Lufthansa #LH9280

Depart Munich: 11:45

Arrive Dulles DC: 15:20

Upon arrival in the transit Airport, participants must first pass through immigration before claiming their luggage and clearing customs. They should then recheck their baggage for the domestic portion of the flight. Airline representatives will be on hand to assist with this procedure.

Directions: Richard Davis and George Bowen meet group upon arrival. Accompany to hotel.

Accommodations:

George Washington University Inn

821 New Hampshire Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20037

Tel: (202) 337-6620

Toll free: 1-800-426-4455

Fax: (202)298-7499

If participants are unable to keep a reservation, please remind participants to call the hotel ahead of time to cancel their reservation. If a reservation is not canceled, they will be billed automatically. Any charges incurred as a result of not canceling a hotel reservation will be their responsibility.

PLEASE NOTE: A World Learning orientation packet will be waiting for participants at the hotel. The participants ask for the packet upon check-in. The packets include the participants' per diem checks, travel itinerary, tax forms, health insurance documents, and other important information. It is very important that the participants review the information carefully before the orientation with World Learning staff. All information will be clarified during the orientation on Monday morning. Participants must bring orientation packets, passports, IAP-66s, and airline tickets with them to the orientation.

PM Rest.

Evening walking tour of Lincoln Memorial and other sights on the Mall, with Richard Davis as tour guide.

Sunday, Nov. 4

Rest. Recommend tour of Washington, DC. Smithsonian Institution buildings, National Archives, other locations.

Monday, Nov. 5

9:00 WL orientation

George Washington U. Day with Dr. Donald Dawkins. Mr. Bowen and Mr. Davis attend, to insure program continuity.

Tuesday, Nov. 6

AM Introduction to UT program.

Action Plans George Bowen and Richard Davis

Introduction of the needs assessment/action planning process, either based upon discussions at The George Washington University, or upon brief presentations from participants on their home situation.

Intro to Web Board follow-on activity

Visit Department of Interior (NPS) National Park Service Role of NPS; relationship with State and local organizations. Working with private sector in and around national parks. Efforts to encourage eco-tourism, and cut down overcrowding/ strain on natural settings and protected, sensitive areas.

Return to Knoxville.

Flight Schedule:

United Airlines #UA7345

Depart DC Dulles 17:15

Arrive Knoxville 18:45

Directions: Met and transported to lodging by UT staff.

Walking tour of area around hotel; if time is available, brief driving tour of Knoxville.

Accommodations:

Days Inn Campus Hotel.

Address: 1706 W. Cumberland Ave.

Knoxville, TN 37916

Tel: (865) 521-5000

Fax: (865) 540-3866

Evening: Reception at home of program coordinator, R. Davis

Wednesday, Nov. 7

AM Brief UT Orientation to daily life in Knoxville. Banking (if necessary).

Overview: Tourism/Ecotourism Development
George Bowen

Tourism Development in the sub-region: Cocke County, Tenn.

Eric Ogle --How local tourism councils work. Relationship between public and private sectors.
Funding issues for rural county tourism activities.

PM Assessing Natural & Cultural Resources for Sustainable Development
G. Bowen

Thursday, Nov. 8

- AM Visit local office of Tennessee Department of Tourism Development
Meet with Lee Curtis and Agnes Gorham, Regional Directors –
Tourism marketing concepts: the Tennessee History, Music, and Craft trails. State government efforts to encourage tourism development: matching grants programs.
- 11:30 Travel to Morristown, TN. Lunch in Morristown, a stop on the Tennessee Heritage Trail.
Tourism based upon history and culture, marketed to people drawn to the Upper East Tennessee region by location between Smoky Mountains and Cumberland Mountains.
- PM Meet with tourism organization. Visit community craft center (Rose Center). Discuss craft festival organization and management.
- Travel to Jonesborough, TN.
- 15:00 Visitors' Center. Meet with Ms. Claudia Moody, North East Tennessee Tourism Association. Organizing a festival with a cultural/historical theme (National Storytelling Festival)
- 17:00 Return to Knoxville

Friday, Nov 9

- 8:15 How people spend their money in ecotourism activities in the region. Report of a study in a 26-county area in Western North Carolina.
Dr. Susan Smith, currently Ass't Prof., Health and Safety Sciences, UT, Former Community Development Specialist, and Associate Director, Mountain Resources Center, Western Carolina University.
- 9:40 Depart for Cosby, TN. Located in a rural area in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Appalachian Trail. Discussions with Director of Tourism, Cocke County and others at the Community Center, including the organization of a cooperative for marketing of a popular hand-made craft item—quilts. Also, visit shops where another local popular hand-made craft item—dulcimers—are manufactured and sold.
- 14:00 Participate in Ecotourism adventure: Rafting on Pigeon River
Please note that normal rafting season ends in October. Rafting requires release of water by TVA; in November, the TVA will not guarantee sufficient water on the rivers in the area. Should rafting on the Big Pigeon River be unavailable, the Outpost Ranch director will offer a 10-kilometer hike on the Appalachian Trail, another standard activity at the Ranch.
- Check into the French Broad (River) Outpost Ranch ("the ranch") in Del Rio, TN, a commercial "dude" ranch aimed at the eco-tourism trade.

Evening entertainment at the ranch and/or nearby Front Porch Restaurant, which features local bluegrass music and dancing.

Overnight at the Ranch.

Sat. Nov. 10

- Horseback riding at the French Broad Outpost Ranch.
Meals as provided as part of the "all-inclusive package" at the Ranch.
- Continue activities at the Ranch, including discussion with owner regarding the establishment and management of his business.
- Overnight at the Ranch.

Sunday, Nov. 11

- Survey Assessment of goods, services and facilities by participants using exit survey tools developed in Bulgaria.
- Return to Knoxville.
Attend the (Smoky Mountain) *Foothills Craft Guild* Craft show.

Meet with organizers to discuss organization, sponsorship, and management of the show. Discuss value of show to local community.

Evening reception at the home of UT faculty member.

Program presenters, university and community members involved with and interested in Bulgaria and ecotourism will be invited for informal interaction. Invitees include Brig. Gen. Fred Forster, Chief of Staff of Tenn. Air National Guard and CEO of Blount County Chamber of Commerce. Gen. Forster was a leader in developing Partnership for Peace link between Bulgaria and the state of Tennessee.

Monday, Nov. 12

8:30 Depart for Great Smoky Mountains National Park

9:45 Arrive at Park

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most visited national park in US; between 10 and 11 million visitors each year. Meet with US Park Service managers to discuss development and management of activities within and near the park.

12:30 Telephone call to WL, lunch

14:00 Tour Pigeon Forge, a Smoky Mountains gateway community

Discussions with Sevier County Tourism Bureau on development in gateway communities. Dependence on Park, and development of independent attractions such as discount shopping and craft industry development which have transformed Pigeon Forge into a year-round tourist destination.

Visit shopping mall.

Return to Knoxville

Tuesday, Nov. 13

7:30 Depart for Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Cove, a very popular tourist destination within the national park, is noted for wildlife viewing opportunities (mostly white-tailed deer, birds and small mammals, but also occasional bears). Also known for its beautiful natural vistas and for the preserved buildings of the former residents in the Cove. Early departure from the hotel to maximize wildlife viewing potential.

Accompanied by Mr. Herb Handly, Exec. VP of Tourism, Smoky Mountain Convention and Visitors Bureau (Blount County tourism).

Experience Your Smoky Mountains Community Organization which connects political and business leaders surrounding the park to the management issues of the park.

Continue to Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association, Englewood, TN.

Multi-county, regional non-profit organization to promote ecotourism. Meet with leaders to discuss community organization for tourism and economic development. Grants and other funding mechanisms. Cooperation between private and public sectors. Marketing of eco-tourism opportunities.

Evening: Continue to Fall Creek Falls State Park, Tennessee's premier state park.

The state's largest and best park, comprising 19,500 acres, Fall Creek Falls State Park features a lodge, a resort inn, conference meeting facility, camping, picnic areas, visitors center, swimming and boating, hiking trails, tennis courts and golf.

Overnight stay in lodge.

Meet at dinner with community leaders from nearby community to discuss how the local community has been able to capitalize its location near the park. Advantages, problems associated with location.

Accommodations:

Fall Creek Falls State Park Inn.

Rte. 3, Box 300

Pikeville, TN 37367

Tel: 423-881-5241; reservations line: 1-800-250-8610

Wednesday, Nov. 14

AM Tour of park, park services. Challenges in developing and maintaining park services.

Drive to Nashville

PM Lee Curtis, Tennessee Heritage and Community Development, arranging State of Tennessee meetings and schedule. Includes meeting at the Tennessee State Capitol with formal greeting by State of Tennessee. Ceremonies and photos publicity opportunity.

During their visit to Nashville, the group will meet with members of the Tennessee Partnership for Peace (Tennessee National Guard). Time to be determined. The Partnership program, established by Gen. Colin Powell in the early 1990's, paired State National Guard organizations with former member nations of the Warsaw Pact. Tennessee's partner is Bulgaria. It was under the auspices of the Partnership that a Tennessee delegation, including members of Tennessee state government, visited Bulgaria in October, 2000.

Overnight in Nashville

Accommodations:

Drury Inn
341 Harding Plaza
Nashville, TN 37211
Tel: (615) 834-7170

Thursday, Nov. 15

AM Meet with Tennessee Department of Tourism Development, and others as arranged by Ms. Curtis. Includes Mr. Alton Kelly, Maury County Convention and Visitors Bureau, who will talk about his experience with Heritage Trail tourism. We anticipate, in addition, following up on the state grants program, as well as connections between National, state, and private sectors. Avenues and obstacles to twinning programs.

PM Return to Knoxville

Friday, Nov. 16

AM Wrap-up discussion.
Web Board session with Eric Ogle
Continue working on Action Plans.

PM Completion and Presentation of Action Plans
WL and UT evaluations

Evening: Farewell and certificate award dinner.

Saturday, Nov 17***Departure Day******--Travel from Knoxville to Dulles, DC --***

Please advise the participants that they should plan to arrive at the airport at least two hours before their international flight is scheduled to depart.

Flight Schedule:

United Airlines #UA7342

Depart Knoxville 11:15

Arrive Dulles, DC 12:45

Lufthansa #LH9281

Depart Dulles, DC 17:55

Sunday, Nov 18

Arrive Munich 08:00+1

Lufthansa #LH3502

Depart Munich 11:00

Arrive Sofia 14:00

16. A more detailed itinerary will be provided to the participants upon their arrival in the United States. Please note that the dates and times of particular training listed above may change before the participants' arrival, but the content will remain the same.

17. Please inform the participants that due to a new US banking law, anyone cashing a check at a bank at which they do not have an account may be asked to provide a fingerprint for security reasons. This law would apply when participants cash per diem checks and purchase traveler's checks. Please note that this law applies to US citizens as well as non-US citizens.

18. Please confirm the TIP by 10/18/01. The participants or the field staff should suggest any changes or additions to the TIP before the call forward date. Once in the United States, participants may discuss any adjustments to the program with WL staff, but changes cannot be guaranteed.

19. Please forward the completed PDO checklist to WL/DC prior to the arrival of the participants.

20. Please advise WL/DC of the cost and date of medcert as soon as possible, and at the latest six work days before departure, so that participants are enrolled in HAC before departure.